

Blackbird by jedifox

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Summary:

Will really wants to dance with Mike on the Snow Ball '84, but he doesn't know how to ask him. He doesn't even know if he wants to go on the ball. He asks Jonathan for advice and his brother tries his best to help him.

Will Byers and Wheeler dance or how does the evening turn out?

Takes place during episode 9 of season 2, but it doesn't really spoil anything. Read at your own risk though.

1. Chapter 1

"Jonathan!" Will's voice was angry. "First of all; I don't want to practice dancing and I certainly don't want you to record me while I'm practicing!" He snarled as he took the video camera away from his older brother and hid it under a pillow.

Jonathan gave him a hurt look and scoffed.

"Okay then, if you want to be an angry little kid, sure then. I just wanna help you!" he snapped and grabbed the video camera and exited the room with a loud smash of the door.

Will sighed loudly and slumped down on the bed. This evening didn't go the way he wanted... It was the eve of the annual Snow Ball and he didn't have anyone to dance with, no-one had even invited him. He didn't understand why he'd had hopes though, who would ever want to dance with *the* Zombie boy? He would've fit better on a Halloween ball than a winter ball.

Tears burned in his eyes, he hid his face in his hands, a sob escaping his mouth as a gutting feeling of sadness took over him. He'd thought everything would be fine now when the shadow monster was out of him, but no, of course not. He didn't deserve anything good in his life. It was like he was a sacrificial lamb, like the lamb his history teacher had talked about. The lamb who was sacrificed to God and Jesus and whatnot.

Will sighed deeply, a few droplets of tears escaping his eyes. He lay down on the bed, not caring he wrinkled his ball clothes. What use was it to go on the ball now? He didn't have a reason to go there. Lucas would surely dance with Max, Dustin would either try to dance with Max - if that didn't work out, he would find someone else to dance with and Mike would definitely dance with Eleven if she showed up... He was alone. All alone. Just like he'd been in the Upside-Down last year. He had no-one.

Tears welled in his eyes again and he started sobbing uncontrollably.

A careful knock sounded from the door.

“Y-yeah...?”

Will tried his best to dry off his tears with a piece of his blanket but failed miserably. His eyes were still puffy and red when Joyce entered the room with careful steps.

“Baby? How are you?” She looked worried, as always. Everyone always worried about him, like he was a baby.

“I’m fine!” he snapped and turned his back to her, staring intently at a black spot on the wall. He felt his mother sitting down on the bedside, a small hand lay on his shoulder.

“Don’t touch me!” he snarled and hit her hand. It quickly moved away back into her lap instead.

“I’m sorry baby. I won’t touch you if you don’t want to... But I’m just... I just want to show I care. Is there something I can do to help you?” Joyce wondered softly as she looked at her son with a warm gaze.

“No!” Will growled, moving closer to the cold wall. “I don’t want to go on the stupid ball with stupid people dancing with each other! I don’t want to be there!”

Joyce felt a lump in her throat but tried to swallow it away. She couldn’t cry, she’d to be strong for Will. For Jonathan. For her family.

“W-why don’t you want to go on the Snow Ball Will? I thought you and your friends had looked forward to it?” she asked carefully.

“Because...” Will fell silent. He was embarrassed.

“Because of what baby?” Joyce asked softly.

Will turned his face to her and looked into her eyes. His brown eyes were filled with unspeakable sadness and grief.

“Because I don’t have anyone to dance w-with. Lucas has Max, Mike has Eleven - if she shows up, Dustin... I dunno, but he will certainly find someone to dance with and I’ve got no one. I haven’t even been asked... I’m the school’s zombie boy and everyone bullies me! I’m a

freak!" He shouted the last part, a few tears escaping his eyes. A sob broke free from his throat.

Joyce looked at her son and felt her heart breaking. Will being bullied... That was really the last thing he needed right now. She opened her arms and her son crept into her embrace like he had when he was just two years old. He hugged her tightly while his hysterical sobs shook his body violently. She caressed his hair softly, feeling the soft strands of hair between her fingers.

"I love you so much Will..." she whispered into his hair.

After a while, Will calmed down and stopped crying. He let go of Joyce and huddled into a ball on top of the bed.

"I completely understand if you don't want to go Will, but if you do want to go, just tell me. I'll be in the kitchen. You've got about an hour to make up your mind, but don't stress it, baby. It's completely understandable if you don't want to go", Joyce said gently before she exited the room.

"How is he?" Jonathan asked when Joyce entered the kitchen.

Joyce sighed, her eyes a bit teary as she sat down at the kitchen table.

"Not good, he's sad no-one has invited to go on the ball with him and he's jealous of his friends. I mean, of course, he is, even though all of this shit has happened with all of us, they've still found some girls to dance with. My heart breaks, I want to help him but I don't know how..." Joyce replied, her voice thick of soon coming tears as she grabbed a cigarette and lit it.

Jonathan nodded and sat down at the table.

"I also don't know how to make him feel better... I tried to tell him a ball is nothing in value, it's just something traditional but it didn't help. I really wish we could help him somehow", he said quietly and fiddled with the edges of the ashtray.

"Yeah... Me too", Joyce mumbled and sucked on the cigarette.

2. Chapter 2

Will stared at the ceiling. There wasn't much time left. He had to make his mind up if he were going to the ball or not. How would the ball benefit him? Maybe it would feel better if he just went there. Maybe the pain wouldn't be as prominent as it was right now. Maybe Eleven didn't show up. Maybe *he* could dance with Mike instead. Maybe Mike would say yes to dance with him. Maybe they could...

He swallowed hard, his heart beating a little faster as he thought of Mike's hair... Face. Lips. His feelings for Mike had always been there but it wasn't until recently they had grown into something warm and fuzzy like he was feeling right now. It had happened during his hospital visit, those few days when he was in and out of consciousness. Mike had been there for him, never leaving his side. He didn't understand the feelings he felt right now, he'd never been in love before but he thought the warm feeling in his chest whenever he thought of Mike was something close to love. Although he wasn't sure...He'd to ask Jonathan about it.

Will's mouth had grown dry. He had to go to the ball, zombie boy and no one to dance with or not. He'd to go there to see if Eleven would show up or not if he could take a chance on Mike if she wasn't there. He didn't care what his friends would say when he invited Mike to a dance. He just had to do it. He felt it in his whole body. He had to ask Mike. He just had to!

"Mom!" Will cried and Joyce almost came running into the room. Her eyes were a bit wild as she looked at him from the doorway.

"Yes, baby?" She asked, her breath stuck in her throat.

"I want to... I want to go on the ball! But I don't know how to dance, can you show me? Or Jonathan?" he said, his voice happier than before.

Joyce felt a strong feeling of happiness growing inside her.

"Of course baby, we'll show you! Come, come!" She said and took a hold of his hand. They went to the living room.

Jonathan had heard their conversation, he was already there - ready with the video camera.

"Yeah, you got it. See?" Joyce said as she danced with Will. The song "Jingle Bell Rock" was playing through the stereo.

"Mom!" Will said happily although a bit annoyed by her.

Joyce laughed, a big smile on her lips. "Wow!" she said as Will took the right steps to the song.

Jonathan walked around them, filming their dance together, smiling.

"Do you always have to be filming everything?" Will asked him, annoyed but with a small smile on his lips.

"No, no. Just the good stuff", Jonathan said with a chuckle as he continued filming them.

Will gave Joyce a skeptical look.

"Are you sure people still dance like this?"

Joyce pondered for a moment,

"Yeah. It's just what's happening", she said and looked at him.

Will nodded and looked into the camera,

"Is this what's happening?" He asked Jonathan skeptically. He wasn't sure Joyce was speaking the truth. She was oldest of them after all, her view of the world didn't always correspond with the real world.

Jonathan frowned,

"Yeah, yeah, it's what's happening!" he replied quickly.

Joyce took a spin and Will followed her easily.

"You know how to dance, you've got it in you!" Joyce said happily and hugged her son tightly. "You don't have anything to worry about, the girls will fall heads over heels in love with you, I promise", she said and kissed his forehead lightly. She hadn't done that since he

was small.

Will blushed slightly and smiled shyly. "I... I hope", he said. Jonathan clicked off the recording and put the video camera into its bag. Joyce gave her wristwatch a glance.

"Holy cow!" She exclaimed. "We have to go! Oh, I just need to pee first!" she said a bit stressed and hurried to the toilet.

Jonathan chuckled at her, he grabbed the camera's bag and drew it over his shoulder.

"Come, buddy, let's go to the car and wait for mom there", he said and they went to the car together.

Will fastened his seatbelt and looked out the window. His heart beat nervously as he thought of the evening and its potential outcome. He tried not getting his hopes up but it was hard. He really wanted to dance with Mike. He hoped he wouldn't say no...

"Jonathan?" Will asked, breaking the silence between them.

Jonathan looked at him through the rearview mirror. He saw Will's face was a bit flushed. Did he have a fever? Or was he just blushing? Why was he blushing? Jonathan frowned.

"Yeah buddy?" he said and smiled. Will looked so handsome in his ball clothing. Mom had really bought the best-suited clothes for him.

Will looked at Jonathan in the mirror, his cheeks growing hotter.

"How do you..." he started, trying to form the words as smooth as possible. He didn't want Jonathan to misunderstand him.

"How do you know you're in love with someone?" he asked, his voice hoarse and strained. He was blushing feverishly now, his heart almost beating out of his chest. His hands were sweaty and a bit shaky.

"Oh..." Jonathan said, he hadn't expected this kind of question but he was glad it was this kind of question.

"Uhm... It's different for everyone. Love is an individual thing, you

feel it differently, but I guess everyone feels a bit warm and fuzzy when they're newly in love. I've always felt warm and fuzzy anyway." Jonathan replied gently. "We could ask mom how she felt when she fell for dad and Bob? If she felt the same", he added and saw how Will fiddled nervously with the seatbelt over his chest.

"N-no... I don't want to ask mom about it. I want this to stay between you and me. I don't want anyone to know..." Will said hastily and looked at Jonathan with big eyes.

Jonathan nodded, understanding fully that this was something very personal to Will.

"Are you... Did you fall in love with someone Will?" Jonathan then asked, curious to hear the answer. His Will had grown so big, already falling in love, going on school proms and stuff... He wasn't a child anymore.

"I think I have... I'm not sure though, I've never been in love before, but... But I do feel this warm fuzzy feeling like you talked about", Will replied, blushing. "Here", he added and put a hand over his fast beating heart. "Right here", he mumbled and swallowed, looking away from Jonathan. His mouth was so dry. He felt a bit flustered. This was embarrassing, talking about feelings with his elder brother.

Jonathan's heart swelled. Will was so cute with his cheeks all blushy, he could see his brother's eyes lighting up when he thought of the one he'd fallen in love with. Jonathan felt proud and happy.

"May I ask who it is? If you want to, don't feel forced to tell me", Jonathan quickly added and gave his little brother a warm smile.

"Don't... Don't judge me please", Will said, his eyes looked nervously at Jonathan through the mirror. A shy smile went over his lips.

"I won't ever judge you Will. You're my buddy, buddies don't judge each other." Jonathan said firmly. He would never judge Will for anything. He was his brother, and brother's needed to take care of each other.

"I think I might... I might be in love with Mike. Mike Wheeler, you

know, my friend, he's the dungeon master when we play Dungeons and Dragons, the one with the b-black hair and..." Will went silent when he saw a small, almost unnoticeable frown on Jonathan's forehead.

This was unexpected, Will being in love with another boy. Jonathan didn't know what to feel. He was happy but at the same time not. Will was already so exposed, would he become even more vulnerable now because of his eventual sexuality?

"I know I shouldn't have told you!" Will's voice seethed with sudden rage and pain. His eyes had turned black of hate. He stared out the window, his mouth tightly shut.

"I.. I'm sorry Will, I was just shocked, I didn't know..." Jonathan was interrupted by Joyce coming into the car. She put the car keys into the ignition lock.

"I'm sorry boys! It took longer than I expected. I was so pale, I had to put some makeup on, but we'll drive to the school now!" Joyce said quickly, it was obvious she was stressed. She had a hysterical aura around her.

The car roared to life and Joyce drove from their house to the school, going over the recommended speed.

She noticed the tense mood between her both sons.

"Did something happen to you when I was gone?" She asked worriedly as she drove the car.

Will stayed quiet, he was still looking out the window without saying a word. His eyes were still black of anger. Jonathan looked at him through the rearview mirror and sighed silently.

"We just had a fit, nothing too serious. You don't have to worry mom", he tried to assure her. She didn't wholly believe him but she decided to go with it.

"Okay", she said and forced a smile. "Will, are you excited for the Snow Ball? You're quite a dancer! I'm proud of you!", she said, trying to ease the tense mood.

Will didn't answer, he was still just looking out of the window. He almost looked a bit sad. Like someone had stolen something from him.

The car ride continued to be quiet, none in the Byers family said anything.

Hawkins Middle School towered before them. Joyce had a hard time finding a parking place but eventually she did. She turned off the car and exited it. Jonathan said a quiet "bye" before he rushed away into the building. He was responsible for the photography today, he'd even get some money for it.

Joyce opened Will's door but Will didn't make any move to leave the car. He was just staring blankly.

"Will? Are you okay?" Joyce asked worriedly and hunched beside him, putting her hand over his forehead to feel if he had any fever. His skin was a bit sweaty but nothing out of the ordinary. "Did you and Jonathan had a fight?" she added and gave his soft cheek a quick pat.

"I don't wanna talk about it..." Will murmured with a sigh and looked at Joyce with sad eyes. The light from before was gone.

"Do you still wanna go? Or do you want to go back home?" Joyce wondered.

Will pondered for a moment. Did he still want to do this? It didn't seem like the brightest idea anymore. The look Jonathan had given him when he'd confessed... It hurt so much. It felt like Jonathan had seen him as the freak he was. He was a freak, a weirdo, something not allowed to be here. A lump formed in his throat, making it harder to breathe. He coughed and drew a hasty breath.

Warning bells rang in Joyce's head. Was Will going to have a panic attack? She'd seen him panicking before, it always started like this.

"Baby, we'll go home, okay? You don't seem to well. I understand if this is too much for you", she whispered calmly and stroked his now clammy cheek.

Will looked like he was about to throw up.

"N-no, mom. I-I still want to go. I just need some air", Will said and unfastened his seatbelt. He went out of the car and gulped air like a thirsty dog. A bit of color returned to his face. Joyce's worry eased a bit.

"Are you sure you'll be fine?" She asked after a moment.

Will looked tiredly at her before nodding.

"Yes, mom. I'll be fine. If I feel... Bad again... I will go out and tell you", he said and cleared his throat, straightening his clothes that had become a bit wrinkly again during the car ride.

Joyce nodded, feeling a bit relieved.

"Good, that's good Will. Hurry now, and have fun, okay? I'm right here if you need me", she said and gave him a quick hug.

"See you", Will said before he walked into the gym hall.

3. Chapter 3

The gym hall was so pretty. There were blue and white streamers hanging everywhere, adorning the hall. A large board with the text Snow Ball 84 stood in the middle of the hall, glittering blue and white. The decoration didn't feel particularly Christmas-y but it was beautiful either way. Will loved it. The hall was packed with people dancing, laughing and drinking some soda.

"Hey Will! You're here!" Lucas' voice shouted from the crowd and he came running toward Will.

The boy gave Will a tight but quick hug.

"I'm glad to see you here, I thought you wouldn't come!" Lucas screamed over the loud music.

"Nice to see you Luc", Will said and smiled. He didn't feel as sad as before, Lucas always had a way to make him feel better.

"Have you seen the other guys anywhere? I haven't seen a glimpse of either Mike or Dustin!" Lucas said, putting his arm around Will's shoulders, steering them toward the side of the hall to a couple of benches. They sat down next to each other.

"No, I haven't seen them. Are you sure Mike's going?" Will asked, careful not to show any feelings besides ordinary happiness.

Lucas gave him an *are you stupid* -look and rolled his eyes.

"Are you actually stupid Will Byers? OF COURSE, Mike is coming! He'd never wanna miss this day, don't you remember what happened last year? He promised he'd take El to the Snow Ball and, hello, we're here now!"

Will felt a small thorn of pain digging into his heart. Of course, Mike was coming, that was good, but he had totally forgotten about Eleven. She would probably show up too. They would dance. They would... kiss... and he'd be forced to watch them. Sudden tears burned his eyes, he tried his best to hide them from Lucas.

“You okay Will?” Lucas asked, suddenly concerned, he saw a couple of tears glinting in Will’s eyes in the light from the lamps.

Shit , Will thought and hated himself for a moment.

“Y-yeah I’m okay, nothing t-to worry about. I just got some glitter or some in my eye”, he excused and rubbed the tears away. He had to seem strong, he couldn’t break down in front of his friends. What would they say if he did? What would Mike say?...

“Okay”, Lucas said with a shrug, moving his gaze from Will to the crowd. “Oh! I think I see them! Come Will!” he said and grabbed Will’s arm harshly. He dragged Will to the entrance of the gym hall. Lucas had been right, Mike and Max were there.

Will’s heart jumped in his chest when he saw Mike. He was so... Handsome? Was that the harder word for good-looking? He thought it was.

“Hey Will, hey Lucas!” Mike said happily and smiled at them. He looked way older than his age, he was so tall compared to Will with his black derby shoes. His clothing fit his slim body perfectly. He could be a model for a magazine.

“Lucas!” Max said happily and was about to hug the boy before she realized what she was about to do. She chuckled nervously, a small blush covering her cheeks. Her hands hid behind her back.

“H-hey Max!” Lucas said nervously and gave her a small smile.

She returned his smile.

Will eyed them jealously before returning his gaze to look at Mike again. “You look really...” He coughed, “handsome”, he added quietly and felt his cheeks burning hot.

Mike laughed and smiled at him, looking genuinely happy by Will’s nice comment.

“You don’t look so bad yourself Byers”, he said and gave Will’s shoulders a quick pat.

“Thank you”, Will said timidly, he heard his own heart beating frantically inside his ears. His mouth went dry again and he swallowed twice.

“Has anyone of you seen Dustin? Where is he?” Max asked, breaking the moment between Will and Mike.

Mike looked at her and shook his head, his black hair flowing in time with his head shaking. Will wonder if Mike had brushed his hair more carefully today than he usually did. It had a certain shine to it. Maybe it was the lightning.

“No, actually I haven’t heard from him all evening”, he said with a frown. “I wonder where he is?”

“He’ll show up eventually”, Lucas said with a shrug. “Let’s go grab some drinks. Nancy calls them *pure fuel* . That sounds really *intriguing* doesn’t it Max?” Lucas added with a laugh and they went to the table where the drinks were.

They talked, laughed and drank drinks for a while. Dustin turned up and wow, he’d done something amazing with his hair. It suited him perfectly, he didn’t look as much as a child anymore, he looked older somehow. Lucas wondered if Steve Harrington had helped him style his hair.

“You look so cool Dustin!” Mike blurted when he saw Dustin.

“Holy shit!” Lucas blurted, “What happened to you?!”

“What do you mean, “What happened?” Dustin asked, confused and frowned at them.

“What?” Mike scoffed, his forehead wrinkling.

“Dude!” Max exclaimed, looking at Dustin with big eyes.

“Is there a bird nesting in there?” Lucas laughed and pointed at Dustin’s curls, digging his fingers into Dustin’s mane.

“What do you mean, “What’s wrong?”” Dustin asked, now annoyed and a bit hurt. “There’s no bird nesting here, asshole! Okay?” he said

angrily to Lucas.

Everyone laughed except for Dustin.

“I worked hard!” Dustin said, touching his mane proudly.

“I think you look nice Dustin”, Max then said genuinely and smiled at him.

“Thank you Max”, Dustin said with a slight blush over his cheeks. Will noticed Dustin had the same look in his eyes as Will had when he was looking at Mike. Dustin was in love with Max, he hadn’t noticed it before...

The upbeat song suddenly changed into a much slower song. *Every Breath You Take* by The Police. The couples on the dance floor suddenly changed their fast dancing into something much slower, waltz. They embraced each other, much like Will and Joyce had done the past evening and they danced in time to the music.

Will noticed Lucas asking Max to dance with him, she accepted and they went out to the dance floor. The other boys looked at them jealously. Will noticed Mike looked a bit sad, but he didn’t dare to ask why. Mike gave the entrance to the hall a longing gaze.

A girl Will didn’t recognize suddenly stood in front of him.

“Zombie-boy”, she said, a playful smile on her lips. “Do you want to dance?” Her hand stretched out to him. Will instinctively moved closer to Mike, their shoulders almost touching. He didn’t want to dance with a random girl, the only one he wanted to dance with was Mike, no one else.

Will gave Mike a helpless look.

“Uhm... I don’t...”

Mike moved his face closer to Will’s, they had never been this close before. Will’s heart hammered in his chest and he swallowed anxiously. He gave Mike a wishful look but Mike didn’t catch the hint. A million thoughts rushed through his head, he couldn’t invite Mike to a dance now, that would seem weird. He couldn’t just bail

this girl either, she'd be sad and he didn't want to destroy her evening. He really didn't want to dance with her but Mike's gaze upon him gave him some solace, he *wanted* him to dance with her. He'd do it for his sake. For Mike.

"I mean... I mean, yeah. Sure." he said, still a bit dazed and confused.

"Cool!" she said with a large smile and took a few steps back, inviting him to start dancing with her. They went out to the dance floor and he tried looking into her eyes but he couldn't concentrate. All he could see was Mike's sad gaze upon him. Was he sad because he wanted to dance with Will? Or was he sad because Eleven hadn't shown up yet? Will didn't know.

They danced for like seemed forever, the song was so long and Will was already getting tired of this. He wanted to dance with Mike, he wanted to share this evening with Mike, not some random girl from another class. He sighed mentally as they continued dancing on the floor. He looked around the crowd to see if he could see Mike anywhere. He didn't.

"Zombie, are you here?" the girl asked annoyingly as he had stopped dancing. "Hello?" she sighed and let go of his hands.

Will flinched at the sudden loss of warmth. He looked at her and felt a blush of shame covering his cheeks.

"I-I'm sorry", he said and left her alone on the dance floor. He pushed his way through the crowd, finally, he got out from the hot mass of human bodies and sat down on the floor close to the entrance to the hall. He took a breath of relief and dried the sweat off his hands on his pants.

The song continued and he sighed. Why hadn't he take a leap of fate and just asked Mike in front of them all if he would wanna dance with him?

You're stupid William Byers , he cursed himself and sighed again.

Two pairs of legs with shoes and grey socks entered through the entrance. He followed the legs over the stomach and up to the face. It

was Eleven. She was here. His heart dropped and he felt nauseous. Fuck.

It was as time stood still when Mike's and Eleven's eyes met. Will could feel it deep in his bones, he was sure everyone else in the room somehow felt it as well. Even though he was some distance away from Mike and Eleven, he still saw Mike's pupils growing twice their size when he looked at her. Will had read somewhere that a human's pupils grow when they look at someone they love. His heart jumped in his chest again, this time with grief as he saw Mike's and Eleven's lips meet. They were kissing. Right in front of him.

Unspeakable pain grabbed his heart, he doubled over and retched onto the floor. Some girls close to him screamed as bile mixed with the pure fuel drink splattered on the floor. Tears burned his cheeks as he started to sob uncontrollably.

"The Zombie boy is at it again!" A boy shouted over the mass and he laughed. People started crowding around Will. He felt like a trapped animal, his stomach roiled again. He rose from the floor, sobbing and crying. He started to run but tripped over someone's foot. He fell to the floor and hit his forehead, his skin split and it started bleeding. He rose again, panic overwhelming him as he ran frantically out into the cool air.

"Will!" Jonathan's voice shouted as he saw his younger brother running out into the night.

People shouted "Disgusting zombie!" after him. He pretended to not hear, but every word struck him like knives. He ran and ran, not thinking where he was headed. He ran until his lungs burned, he sagged down to the ground, feeling its coolness wash over him. His heartbeat calmed and he could breathe easier. Maybe it was here he belonged, maybe he should bury himself down into the ground. He knew the Upside-Down was here. Even though the shadow monster had left him, he could still feel its presence in the world. He felt the Upside-Down pulsing deep beneath the earth.

Will closed his eyes, feeling his body slowly sinking into the earth. The Upside-Down invited him, he couldn't resist its temptation. He needed to be somewhere he couldn't be found. No-one wanted to be

with him anyway. Mike was with Eleven. Lucas with Max. Dusty with Nancy. Jonathan with Nancy. Steve with... With himself. Joyce with Hopper... He had nobody. He was nobody. He was alone.

4. Chapter 4

“Mom!” Jonathan shouted where he came running.

Joyce released Hopper quickly and looked at her elder son. He was worried and seemed stressed. Her stomach churned and she immediately thought of Will.

“What’s wrong Jo?” She asked and took a few quick steps to him. Hopper watched them with an arched eyebrow.

“Will...” Jonathan gasped, he’d run so fast. “Will threw up on the floor, then he ran away all of a sudden. Did you see him? I don’t know where he went!” Jonathan blurted. He was clearly upset. “Some dipshit kid made him trip too!”

Joyce felt worry mixed with anger taking over her.

“We have to find him! Do you know why he just... Threw up and ran away? Did something happen?” she asked and looked for the car keys in her handbag.

Hopper lay his hand on her shoulder.

“Come, we can take my car”, he said and they jumped into the police jeep.

“I’m not sure, I was photoing some kids when I saw Eleven coming in through the entrance, and she and Mike met up, they hugged and...” Jonathan swallowed harshly, he knew now why Will had run out like he did.

“And?” Joyce asked, close to being hysterical. She couldn’t handle another night worrying about Will, what if they couldn’t find him?

Hopper pushed the accelerator, the car lurched in protest but increased its speed. “Calm down Joyce, we’ll find him. Don’t worry”, he said in an attempt to calm her.

“Please, mom and Hopper. Don’t ever tell Will I tell you this, please. Promise me that”, Jonathan said quickly. He hated he had to break

his promise to Will but this was important. They had to know.

"Yes, of course, we promise Jonathan! Just tell us what you know!" Joyce replied, her eyes big and worried.

Jonathan told them about his conversation with Will in the car before they'd went to the Snow Ball. Joyce didn't say a word during the entire explanation.

"Will's..." she frowned and swallowed, didn't know how to comprehend this. Her brain was already full of so much worry and stuff, she thought she would die of stress before she reached 40.

"Will is in love with Mike Wheeler, did I understand you right?" she added and looked at her son.

Jonathan nodded, "That's right. He confessed to me. That's why he's been upset all evening, or at least it's a part of why he's been upset. I..." He pondered. "I think it's one-sided love, sadly", he added, a sting of sadness in his voice.

Joyce sighed deeply and massaged her temples.

"O-okay", she said.

Hopper didn't know what to say. He'd suspected this for a while. He'd seen the boys looks at Mike. It was no surprise really. They were children, soon to be teenagers, they were exploring their sexuality and he didn't think it was weird if Will had resorted more to Mike than the other boys. They had spent quite a long time together at the institute, Mike had never left Will's side. At one point, they had even slept together in the same bed.

"Where do you think he'd go? Do you have a hunch?" Hopper instead asked, focusing on the task. Finding Will.

"I have no idea... I don't think he knows either, I think he just ran straight ahead without a goal", Jonathan said, pondering.

"Okay, then I think we'll look in the vicinity to the school", Hopper said plainly and parked close to a nearby football plain.

“Guys, where is Will?” Dustin said, suddenly noticing Will wasn’t there with them. Mike seemed to come to his senses, he’d been all caught up in the moment from before, when he and Eleven had kissed and hugged. Gosh, he had never felt like that before. It was an awesome feeling. Eleven looked at him and smiled shyly, a cute blush on her cheeks. Mike held her hand tighter in his.

“Will? I haven’t seen him since the slow dance!” Max said, smiling at Lucas who’d just given her cheek a quick peck.

Dustin rolled his eyes at the two love-pairs and made a nauseating sound. “I haven’t seen him either. Maybe we should look after him?” he said and his friends nodded.

They looked around the gym hall but couldn’t see Will anywhere. They asked around but no-one had seen the boy.

Steve came walking to them. “I’m just here to take a sip of the drinks, nothing else”, he defended himself when he saw the kids walking up to him.

“Steve, have you seen Will?” Dustin asked, looking at him with big eyes. Steve shook his head, his hair flowing with the movements.

“No, actually I haven’t. Isn’t the brat with you? He always tails after you Mike”, Steve said carelessly with a shrug.

“What do you mean “tails” after me?” Mike scoffed, holding Eleven’s hand even tighter as if to prove something.

”Hurts”, Eleven said quietly and smiled awkwardly at Mike. Mike’s face turned red and he eased the grip of her hand a little.

“Sorry”, he whispered.

Dustin sighed angrily, “No! Will isn’t with us! We’ve asked around for him but we can’t find him”, he snarled. “Can you please help us look for him?”

Steve sighed but nodded, it wasn’t like he’d planned to do anything

else. He followed the kids around as they looked once again through the hall after Will. People had started going home due to it being quite late.

“Hey dipshit”, Steve said to a kid who smiled evilly at them. “You seem guilty, have you seen Will Byers?”

The kid shook his head, his smile growing larger.

“You’re not very good at hiding stuff, dickhead”, Dustin said angrily to the kid and suddenly pushed him against the wall. “You’ve seen him, tell us!” Dustin shouted, some spit dotted the other kid’s face.

“Okay okay, fatty. He was sitting here, crying or some shit, then when he saw the girl”, he said and pointed at Eleven,

“He started going all crazy and I made him trip, you should’ve seen his face! He split his forehead, bleeding and shit and then he just ran out!” The kid started laughing an ugly laugh.

Dustin snarled and was about to give the kid a real punch but Steve parted them and took hold of the kid instead.

”Go, Steve!” Lucas and Max cheered.

“Which direction?” Steve snarled between his teeth and the kid pointed to the football plain with a shuddering finger.

He let the kid go and the gang went toward the football field.

5. Chapter 5

“My fault Will ran away?” Eleven said worriedly and gave Mike a sad look. She felt guilty but she didn’t know what she had done to make Will run away.

”No El! No, it’s not your fault”, Mike assured her and kissed her cheek quickly. “Will’s just sensitive. He... He’s not himself. I haven’t had the time to tell you everything that happened during this past year, but I’ll try to summarize it for you”, Mike explained everything that had happened during the past year as short and concise as he could. Lucas, Max, and Dustin filled in the parts where he didn’t know how to explain. Steve came with an explanation or two at times.

”I see. I understand”, Eleven said, feeling a bit relieved now that she knew everything that happened before. Her forehead wrinkled as she looked at Mike and his friends.

“Will... Is Will in love... With you?” she asked, her eyes curious. She smiled like she thought it was cute Will could be in love with Mike.

Dustin and Lucas let out a loud nervous chuckle at the same time. Steve mumbled “what the fuck” and Max said nothing, she just stared at Eleven with large eyes.

“What???” Mike exclaimed, not understanding a thing. He scoffed. “What do you mean El? Why would *Will* be in love with me?”

Eleven shrugged, “It just feels... Like he is... You know?”

Mike let out another scoff blended with a laugh.

“I think you’re wrong but you’re free to your own opinion! Maybe it’s your magic talking or something. Will in love with me??” He laughed again and looked at his friends.

They shrugged, maybe it was true? Maybe Will had feelings for Mike? It wasn’t weird if he did. Mike had been there all year for him and they had spent time together, close to each other, a while at the

institute.

“I don’t think it would be *that* weird if Will does have feelings for you Mike”, Max confessed and looked at him with her blue eyes. “I’ve seen the way he looks at you and... Well... It could be love”, she said with a shrug.

Her friends looked weirdly at her, they didn’t know what to think.

Suddenly, Joyce, Jonathan, and Hopper met up with them.

“Kids!” Joyce called out and hugged them all, including Steve. “I’m so glad to see you. I take it you know Will is gone?” she added and looked at each one of them.

“Yeah, we hadn’t seen him for a while so we started looking for him and we met some guy that had made him trip and...” Dustin started but was interrupted by Lucas.

“We know he ran this way at least, the guy said he ran to the football plain”, he said.

Joyce nodded, “Yes, we’ve looked all over the plain but it’s hard to see in this dark... We couldn’t find him”, her voice was thick with soon erupting tears.

Hopper put a hand on her back. “We’ll continue looking, of course, we can’t give up. Will must be found”, he said and comforted Joyce by stroking her back with careful strokes.

Jonathan nodded frantically. “El?” he said, looking at the younger girl.

She nodded and smiled a bit insecure. “Yes Jonathan?” she said quietly.

“Do you think maybe you can... you know, track him?” he asked carefully. She looked away from him, she looked at Mike instead.

“Yes El, please, do it. Track him, maybe he’s in danger or something. We need to find him”, Mike assured her, giving her hand a quick assuring squeeze.

She nodded, “Yes, I will track Will, but I need something to cover my eyes with”, she said and looked at their clothes.

“Do you need something static? Like a-a radio or a TV or something?” Joyce asked but Eleven shook her head.

“No, I don’t need static for this. I think he’s close”, she said and smiled.

Eleven sat down a nearby bench with Mike beside her. Hopper had torn off a piece of his shirt to use as a blindfold for Eleven. She put the blindfold around her eyes and Mike helped her knot it at the back of her head. She whispered a quiet thank you to him.

She took a deep breath and let her power surge through her. The world around her disappeared and instead, she appeared in a large empty space with water beneath her feet.

“Will?” she called, feeling his presence but not seeing him anywhere near. She ran around the black water, calling and looking for Will but couldn’t find him anywhere. She felt his presence being close, but he was nowhere to be seen. She stopped and wondered what she should do next.

“Will... I know you’re upset, I know something happened to you that made you sad, but... Could you please come out of your hiding? We’re worried about you”, she said, letting her words echo around the whole black sea.

“Why? There’s no point”, Will’s voice was close but still far away. It was heavy like it didn’t belong to him but to someone else. It was filled with pain and grief.

“Will!” Eleven called out, using her power to look for him. She felt his presence drawing her closer to him, he was somewhere underneath.

Eleven returned back to the real world with a gasp. “Found him!” she said and rose from the bench, hurried her steps away to the field.

“Where?” Jonathan and Joyce said at the same time, running behind her together with the rest of the gang.

“Let me show you”, Eleven said quickly and they hurried to Will.

“Here,” Eleven said firmly, poking at a sunken circle into the ground. It looked unnatural like it had happened just recently. Like something had dug down under the ground. “He’s beneath the ground here”, she added, still pointing at the middle of the circle.

Hopper nodded and went to the car to fetch a shovel. Lucas, Dustin, and Max started digging through the hole with their bare hands, not caring their formalwear became clogged with dirt and grass. Joyce stood beside the hole, worrying out of her soul. Jonathan was beside her, trying to calm her down. Steve was close, looking for a branch or something they could use if Will were stuck somewhere and needed something to hold on to.

Hopper returned quicker than they thought he would and they started digging the hole. Eleven was right, they found Will lying almost at the bottom of the ground, black vines enveloping him.

”Will!” Joyce screamed, frightened out of her mind. Jonathan took her into his arms and hugged her, not letting her see.

“Will!” the kids shouted.

“You stay here!” Hopper said sternly before him and Steve jumped down the hole.

Hopper dropped on his knees beside Will and started to cut the black vines. They screamed in pain, only tightening their grip around Will, they didn’t want to let him go.

“I thought this shit was gone!” Dustin exclaimed shocked, he was looking down the hole.

“Me too”, Hopper said with gritted teeth, cutting the last of the vines around Will’s body. They reverted into the ground and disappeared. Hopper lifted Will into his arms as he’d done many times before and Steve helped them up from the hole with the branch he’d found. They came up from the hole, the kids hurried with covering the hole.

Hopper put Will on the ground next to Joyce and Jonathan, tried to find a pulse on his neck but didn’t.

"I can't..." Hopper's voice was thick, he couldn't get the words out. "NO!" Joyce screamed, tears spurting out of her eyes. "MY BOY!" she shrieked. Jonathan started crying as well, his whole body shaking with every sob.

Mike just stared blankly at Will's body, not believing what he saw. Was it his fault that Will was... dead?

Lucas, Dustin, and Max were silent and white as sheets in their faces.

Eleven closed her eyes with a deep sigh and went to the black sea. She saw Will lying in the water, huddled into a ball. His face was white, his lips were blue but he was still alive.

"Will?" she said, her hand on his cold back.

He didn't answer, he just stared blankly at her.

"Will... Come back, we-we miss you", she said, a tear running down her cheek.

Will shook his head, "There's no point. I belong to the ground", he said, his voice flat and void of emotion.

"No. Will belongs with us, over the ground, in the sunlight. You're not becoming swallowed by the black hole. It's too early", she said with a small smile. She stroke his back slowly as she had seen Hopper do to comfort Joyce.

A small light came into Will's empty eyes.

"I do? I belong there?" he murmured, conflicted. "But Mike..." he said, his voice thick with pain and anguish.

"Mike needs you too", she said simply, his eyes sparkling with life again.

"He does?" he asked, his eyes glinting like starlight now.

Eleven gave him a warm smile and nodded slowly. "He does."

6. Chapter 6

Will woke with a harsh gasp, he coughed as his lungs were filled with air. He looked at him and saw the faces of his friends and family. Joyce, Jonathan, Hopper, Steve, Dustin, Lucas, Max, Eleven and... Mike. His cheeks blushed as Mike looked at him with his brown eyes, his heart took a small somersault in his chest.

"Nice to have you back buddy, did you sleep well?" Jonathan asked, his eyes full of tears but his voice filled with love. He hugged his brother tightly and sobbed. They all joined in the hug and hugged Will tightly, he'd never felt this loved before.

"Never leave us again you fool, you hear that?" Dustin said, ruffling Will's dirty hair. "We need our wizard in our party, we can't clear the dungeons without you!"

"Yeah, Dusty's right! Without a wizard, our team would just be shit", Lucas said and laughed.

"No one could take your place in our team, Will", Max smiled. "Even a zoomer needs a wizard", she said and gave his forehead a quick peck.

Will blushed and laughed, "Thanks, guys", he said, his voice hoarse.

"And a mage needs her wizard teacher", Eleven said, smiling shyly at him. She was still having her hand on his back. Will looked at her, smiled thankfully and nodded.

"Yeah I am your teacher after all", he said proudly. They all laughed and hugged again.

"And..." Mike said, kneeling beside Will and smiling at him. "The Dungeon Master needs the party to be full, otherwise the game can't even begin, continue or end. You're a vital part of our team", he said. "And a vital part to me", he whispered close to Will's ear so only Will could hear.

Will thought he would die right on the spot. His head spun and his

heart beat so fast he thought it would escape right out of his chest. He hoped Mike couldn't see it.

"Never do that again", Joyce whispered, her tears wetting Will's cheek as she hugged him tightly.

"I promise", he mumbled.

"Listen to your mother", Hopper said firmly but with affection. He ruffled Will's dirty hair.

After cleaning themselves, eating KFC which Hopper treated them all, they went home to their own homes except for Mike. He wanted to have a sleepover with Will. He kissed Eleven a quick goodbye before she went home with Hopper. He thanked her for helping them and for bringing Will back. She hadn't told her it was she who'd brought him back, but Mike just knew it.

Joyce had gone to sleep as soon as Hopper left the house, she was so tired after the events of the day, she hoped she'd never had to go through another Snow Ball again.

Mike and Will were in Will's room, they'd been playing on Will's Atari for an hour but Will had started feeling tired. He yawned widely and scratched his newly washed hair. It was still damp.

"I'm just gonna go and change into my pajamas", he said and hurried to the bathroom to change his clothing.

Mike changed into his pajamas as well, he looked around Will's room in pure curiosity and found a cassette tape stowed beneath a couple of books.

Bird it said simply.

Mike frowned and put the cassette in the stereo and pushed the "play" button. He was sure to make the volume as low as possible so they wouldn't wake Joyce and Jonathan. A soft guitar started playing and Paul McCartney's voice filled the room. Did Will like Beatles? He'd never told Mike about it.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these sunken eyes and learn to see

All your life,

You were only waiting for this moment to be free

Mike's eyes were a little teary when Will came into the room. Will heard the song from the stereo and he blushed so strongly, even his ears became red. His love of The Beatles was one of his many secrets. He'd never told anyone except Jonathan he liked The Beatles, nonetheless Blackbird.

"W-What's... What is it?" Will asked carefully, looking at Mike who just stared at him with his beautiful eyes all teary.

Paul McCartney continued singing softly;

Black bird fly, black bird fly

Into the light of the dark black night

Black bird fly, black bird fly

Into the light of the dark black night

"This song..." Mike began, "I have never thought about it... But it somehow reminds me of you", he said and a shy smile played over his lips.

Will's heart started beating faster, "Of me? What do you mean Mike?" he asked, frozen still in the doorway.

The bird in the song started chirping cheerfully.

“Yes, well, you... With everything that has happened to you, with the shadow monster, with the Upside-Down, Bob... You know what I mean right?” Mike said, trying to explain his thoughts.

Will nodded, he thought he understood what Mike meant.

“I guess I do understand what you mean”, he said, smiling nervously.

Mike nodded, “I’m glad you do”, he said and moved closer to Will. They were standing only inches from each other now. Will felt like he was about to faint. Mike’s cheeks turned a hint of red before he spoke.

”Do... Do you want to dance?” Mike asked, offering his hand to Will.

Will stared at Mike’s beautiful face and lips, couldn’t believe what he’d just heard him say.

“Wh-what?” he whispered, his heart beating so loud he almost couldn’t hear the song.

“Dance with me”, Mike whispered timidly and took a firm but soft hold of Will’s hand and drew him closer. Their bodies touched, Will could feel Mike’s warmth radiating from his skin. Mike put his hands around Will’s waist and guided him to the rhythm of the music.

“Blackbird singing in the dead of night, take these broken wings and learn to fly, all your life...” Mike sang in time with McCartney close to Will’s ear, while he danced slowly with Will.

Will suddenly closed the small space between them and lay his head on Mike’s shoulder, their cheeks touched for a moment. Will’s hair touched Mike’s cheek when his cheek brushed him, his hair was soft and smelled nice.

Mike leaned into the embrace and they hugged tightly while they danced to the music.

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

You were only waiting for this moment to arise...

The song stopped but they kept embracing each other even as the tape stopped spinning. The room went silent and Will was sure Mike could hear his heart beat madly.

“Thank you”, Will whispered almost inaudibly before he released Mike, but Mike kept holding him tightly. Will didn’t understand a thing, wasn’t Mike in love with Eleven and not him? What was he thinking?

“Mike... I don’t want you to do something you’re not... comfortable with”, Will mumbled, trying to get out of Mike’s grip but he couldn’t, Mike was stronger.

“J-just... Just h-hug me Will”, Mike replied back in a soft whisper. They continued to just hug each other, standing in the same spot as they had when the song stopped. Mike could feel Will’s heart beating so fast against his own chest. How had he never noticed Will’s feelings for him? How could he have been so blind?

Mike finally let go of Will, as soon as he did, Will already missed the warmth of his skin. They looked at each other awkwardly, Mike sat down on the mattress he would sleep on and crept underneath the blanket. Will lit his night lamp before he turned off the ceiling light. He crept into his bed and shuffled beneath the blankets. They didn’t say a word to each other.

Will turned off the light completely and the room was basked in complete darkness. He heard Mike sighing, or... was he sobbing? He didn’t know and he didn’t dare to ask, he was silent instead.

Will swallowed, his mouth becoming immediately dry as Mike was beside him.

“D-do you want me to hold you? Like.. Like old times?” Mike whispered, a small hope in his voice that Will didn’t quite understand. And with old times... Did he refer to the short time they’d had together at the Lab?

“Uhm... S-sure... If... If that’s what you want?” Will murmured and

felt one of Mike's arms drawing him close to his warm body. He softly put Will's head on his chest, right on top of his heart. Will thought he was going to melt into a pool of water when he heard Mike's heart beat as fast as his own. He didn't understand this situation at all but he was glad it was happening.

Mike suddenly placed a soft kiss on the top of Will's head.

"Take this broken wings and learn to fly", he murmured, quoting The Beatles' song. "I'll protect you, Will, while you're learning how to fly", he whispered in the dark.

Will's eyes became teary, he swallowed the lump in his throat and snuggled into Mike's chest.

"Thank you", he whispered for a second time this evening.

Mike chuckled softly before he moved Will's head so he was facing him again. They looked at each other, Mike noticed Will's pupils were larger than usual. Sure it was dark in the room, but they weren't normally this big even though it was dark.

Will smiled, not knowing what to do or say more than "thank you". Mike moved his face closer to Will's and their noses brushed slightly before their lips touched. Will instinctively made his lips pout when their lips met and they kissed. Mike let out a soft sigh when he felt Will's soft lips upon his. It felt right, just like it did when he kissed Eleven. He loved them both so much his heart ached, he could never just choose one of them. He would explain everything to her when they met tomorrow, she would understand.

It was a careful, not too eager kiss. Their tongues touched and Will thought he was going to pass out. He'd never kissed anyone before, less felt another human's tongue. Mike played with Will's tongue before they both became a little nauseous, they chuckled awkwardly and stopped using their tongues, they kissed without their tongues for another moment before Will broke the kiss and looked at Mike with dilated pupils. "Thank you", he whispered, the third time this evening, not knowing anything else to say. His heart ached with love for Mike.

Mike stroke Will's cheek carefully with his fingertips.

"I love you", Will blurted out, immediately regretting his words as soon as they'd jumped out of his mouth.

Mike laughed, his white teeth almost glowing in the light when he laughed.

"I love you too, Will".